

12 German words you won't find in English.

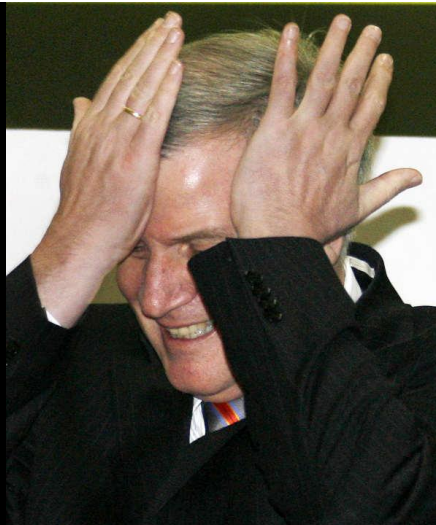


Verabredet

Germans don't just agree to meet up at two, and then rely on their mobile phones to explain why they're late. They make utterly clear, unambiguous appointments. And then they describe themselves as "verabredet." "You are late. We were *verabredet*. I am simply not understanding this." It's an adjective that defines a whole culture.

Photo: DPA

Note: It's like saying you are "committed" to an appointment. Being committed to an appointment means you would certainly not be late, and definitely not forget the appointment. It's set in stone.



Treppenwitz

Another wonderful German word, for a bittersweet situation familiar to everyone on the planet. The *Treppenwitz*, literally "stair-joke," is the brilliant comeback you think of when you're already out of the door and halfway down the stairs. "And you, sir, are a prick! Ach! If only I'd thought of that at the time!"

Photo: DPA



Fahne

This does not just mean flag. It's also the special type of flag that flutters in your face and stings your eyes when a drunkard tells you he always loved her, you know, honestly, really loved her, despite how it looks. "Please wave that Fahne somewhere else."

Photo: DPA

eine Fahne = the stream of bad breath coming from someone's mouth that invades your nose.



Drachenfutter

You've stayed out late and you weren't supposed to. Your wife has put the kids to bed, made your dinner, and given it to the dog. What you need is *Drachenfutter* - a gift that will, literally, feed the dragon, outmoded sexist interpretations of gender roles notwithstanding. "Oh no, I hope the late-night shop is open. I'm absolutely off my face and I need some Drachenfutter."

Photo: DPA



Kummerspeck

The English have "comfort food," but the ever-thorough Germans have taken that concept to its obvious biological conclusion. *Kummerspeck*, literally "sorrow bacon," is the extra bulges that develop once you've consumed too much comfort. "Is that Kummerspeck, or are you just pleased to see me?"

Photo: DPA



Fremdschämen

This is a truly vital word, missing from English, and indeed every language in the world (probably) - except German. It means to be ashamed FOR someone else. How often have you wanted to express that feeling in one neat, perfect word? "Yes, I was very fremdgeschämt when I read the new book by Women's Minister Kristina Schröder."

Photo: DPA



Rabenmutter

In keeping with their 19th century image of family roles, Germans have a special word for a bad mom. It literally means "raven mother." Apparently baby ravens in the wild eat nothing but ketchup and are allowed to play with scissors. "Look, that child has not got a hat on and it's below 20 degrees Celsius. What a Rabenmutter."

Photo: DPA



Pechvogel and Glückspilz

In the Germans' skewed image of the universe, the bird, soaring free through the sky, is an unlucky beast, but to be a mushroom is a fate associated with good fortune. It's fun to be a fungi. "Oh no, my fungi has ceased to grow. I am such a Pechvogel." *Pech* means bad luck and *Glück* is good luck. See if you can work the rest out yourselves.

Photo: DPA



Handschuhschneeballwerfer

Everyone hates the coward willing to criticize and abuse from a safe distance. The Germans equate that person with the lowest of the low: the one who wears gloves when throwing snowballs. As far as they're concerned, a snowball fight is not a snowball fight until someone gets frostbite.

Photo: DPA



Quergebäude

Germans, it turns out, have specific names for different parts of the same building, largely because of the structure of blocks of apartments in Germany. There's a *Vorderhaus* (front area), a *Seitenflügel* (side area), a *Hinterhof* (back area) and something called a *Quergebäude*, which is, erm, the across area. *Quer* means across, and can also be used as in the wonderfully literal term *querlegen* - to obstruct.

Photo:DPA



Verschlimmbessern

There's being hamfisted, or putting your foot in it, or there's just plain clumsiness, but in German there's the very specific act of *verschlimmbessern*, which is when you make something worse in the very act of trying to improve it. "Oh no, that extra piece of cheesecake, far from being nutritious, has just *verschlimmbessert* my digestive tract."



Radfahrer

This is a deceptively simple word that weirdly hints at German's darkest perversion. It just means cyclist, but in some German circles it refers to an employee who sucks up to his superiors while treading on his inferiors, thus imitating the posture of a cyclist. Not literally. That would be truly horrid.

Photo: DPA

Ask yourself: Why does English not have, need, or want this word? Or does it?